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CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 8 February 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Hendrik Wagenmakers (Netherlands)

GE.90-60137/1544B

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 533rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference will listen to statements and continue to deal with a number of organizational questions. In accordance with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, however, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

When we reach the end of our list of speakers today, I intend to suspend the plenary meeting and convene an informal meeting for the consideration of various organizational questions, including requests for participation from States not members of the Conference. Immediately afterwards, we shall resume the plenary meeting for any decisions that we may need to formalize.

I have on my list of speakers today the representatives of Egypt, Brazil and Argentina. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Egypt, Ambassador Elaraby.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt): It gives me great pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over the Conference on Disarmament. Your extensive diplomatic experience, including your previous association with the Conference on Disarmament, reassures us that our deliberations will be ably and wisely conducted during this crucial month at the beginning of the spring session. I also wish to extend a warm welcome to the new Ambassadors who have joined us, starting with you, Mr. President, as the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador García Moritán of Argentina, Ambassador Shannon of Canada, Ambassador Hou of China, Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso of Italy, Ambassador Donowaki of Japan, Ambassador Marín Bosch of Mexico, Ambassador Ledogar of the United States and Ambassador Arteaga of Venezuela. I wish them all success in their new assignments.

I take the floor today, very briefly, to present to the Conference on Disarmament a report on the national trial inspection carried out by Egypt. The report is contained in document CD/958 of 23 January 1990. The trial inspection was conducted at one of our chemical plants in a Cairo suburb at the end of last summer. The principal objectives of the trial inspection were to verify whether data on the production and processing of the chemical substance covered by the inspection were consistent with the records; that the facility was not being used to produce any chemical listed in schedules [1] or [2]; and that the reaction could not be stopped at a specific stage with a view to producing another chemical listed in schedules [1] or [2].

In the course of the national trial inspection it became clear that several provisions of the draft convention concerning verification by inspection on a routine basis require further study. Other questions also arose with regard to access to confidential information and protection of confidentiality. The report contains a list of these issues. I wish to add that my delegation is ready to discuss this trial inspection with other delegations in the Conference on Disarmament with a view to improving procedures for genuine routine inspections.

I shall be asking for the floor at a later stage to express my delegation's views on the items on our agenda.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words that he addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Brazil, Ambassador Azambuja.

Mr. AZAMBUJA (Brazil): First of all allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on taking up the presidency of the Conference for this month of February, the period we know to be usually burdened with some difficult issues which I am sure, with your well-known diplomatic skills, you will be able to overcome expeditiously. I also take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Benhima of Morocco again for his achievement as President for the preceding period, a long and difficult one when we discussed and adopted our report to the General Assembly.

I have a long list of names of colleagues who have left us and new colleagues who have joined us. You will allow me, Sir, to read the names. I would like to say how much I will miss the company and the advice of Ambassador de Montigny Marchand of Canada, Ambassador Max Friedersdorf of the United States, Ambassador Chusei Yamada of Japan, Ambassador Taylhardat of Venezuela and Ambassador Aldo Pugliese of Italy. I wish them every success in their new assignments. They left their mark and made a tangible contribution. By the same token I would like to seize this opportunity to welcome very warmly Ambassador Shannon of Canada, Ambassador Ledogar of the United States, Ambassador Arteaga of Venezuela, Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso of Italy, Ambassador Donowaki of Japan, Ambassador Pérez Novoa of Cuba, Ambassador García Moritán of Argentina, Ambassador Marín Bosch of Mexico and Ambassador Hou Zhitong of China.

I have not included the name of Ambassador García Robles in the list of colleagues whose departure I note with regret. I think it will be easy for all of us to understand why I applied such positive discrimination, based exclusively on merit, on achievement and on a unique lifelong dedication to the cause of peace and disarmament. Ambassador García Robles deserves a singular and separate mention at this juncture. He made all of us Latin Americans proud of our region and of our common cultural heritage and shared humanistic values. Ambassador Marín Bosch, who comes from the same excellent school of Mexican diplomacy, will be kind enough, I am sure, to convey our words to the old maestro with the expression of my constant respect. The Nobel Peace Prize recognizes his achievements. Another distinction will be his presence in the memories of those who worked with him on any of the sides of this table, and came to learn from him, as I had the privilege to do over such a long period, almost 30 years from the early stages of work on what was to become the Treaty of Tlatelolco. I wish him all personal happiness, health and a very fruitful retirement.

I could not conclude my introduction without mentioning the pleasure of seeing again the presence of Under-Secretary-General Akashi in our midst. He brings to us the words from New York, the energy, the enthusiasm and his constant commitment to our cause. I would also like to express my thanks to Ambassador Miljan Komatina and Ambassador Vicente Berasategui and all their staff for their very valuable work on our behalf.

(Mr. Azambuja, Brazil)

I am very glad to have been given this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament at the very outset of our 1990 calendar. I would just like to make a few observations on behalf of the Brazilian Government on the work before us and its relationship to what is going on outside this magnificent room. I will also address today the present stage of the negotiations on a chemical weapons convention, leaving to another occasion the remaining and equally relevant items of our agenda.

There can be no doubt that 1989 was a crucial year. It has been considered by most actors, witnesses and analysts as marking the end of the cold war and also the end of the long cycle of connected events and attitudes that have prevailed since shortly after the conclusion of the Second World War. Some scholars and commentators go even further. They see 1989 as the conclusion of the twentieth century as a coherent historical period. Were it so ours would be remembered as a particularly short "historical" century, since it is universally considered to have begun only in 1914. Other commentators would strike a note of caution here. They would warn us not to be carried away by the flood of good news coming out of our television screens and newspaper headlines, and would advise us to avoid being enthusiastic or over-optimistic.

They certainly have a point inasmuch as the evident aspirations to peace of the peoples and the leaders of the States which were formerly directly engaged in the cold war have yet to take firm shape in new disarmament agreements, the progressive dismantling of military alliances and more substantial reductions in military expenditure. At the same time, we all hope that this note of cautious optimism will be modified by future developments, for this whole new process itself is obviously just at its beginning.

We can say - at this stage - that by all accounts we stand at a threshold. Because some of the major conflicts have been resolved or have been superseded by events, the immediate past allows a rather clear and sharp retrospect. The immediate future seems more promising than at any other point during the last 40 years or so. The tempo of political developments related in one way or another to the so-called East/West conflict, be it in Europe or elsewhere, has achieved the vigour and speed that seemed in recent decades to be the hallmark of scientific and technological progress. Many new ideas and concrete proposals have emerged which suggest that in the world of political values, which are so difficult to assess objectively, steps forward can now be clearly identified and perceptions shared.

It is only natural that this unmatched period of dialogue and co-operation between the super-Powers should bring about solutions to many of the regional problems or conflicts which were, in many cases, basically a local expression of the rivalry between the two major international actors. There are, however, situations that have their roots in other causes, be it of a historical, political, ethnic-religious or socio-economic nature, producing tensions, thriving on poverty and misery and all their dire attendant consequences. These problems and situations have proven to be much more resistant to accommodations deriving from the major Powers' entente.

(Mr. Azambuja, Brazil)

These unwelcome but persistent realities must necessarily qualify the optimism now pervading the international scene at the end of this century, particularly from the point of view of the developing world. The same decade that concluded two months ago and witnessed such extraordinary political achievements has been accurately called, for the developing world and my own region in particular, the "lost decade". For most of the third world, in the crucial dimension of social and economic achievement, these have been largely wasted years.

After this short but necessary digression, to remind us that all is not rosy outside this room, allow me to return to my main theme. When all is said and done, this year begins under the most brilliant auspices for this the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. In past years the frustrations of multilateral disarmament efforts were somewhat matched by the stalemate and parallel frustrations of bilateral super-Power diplomacy in this same area. Now, with the tangible step forward made in 1987, with the INF Treaty, and with hopes of a major strategic disarmament treaty - at the bilateral level - and a conventional disarmament agreement - at the regional level - in Europe, the absence of any major achievement coming from this body will be difficult to explain or justify to the international community. The inability, up to now, of the same major players that have broken new ground in their bilateral negotiations and are prodding the Viennna talks to a fruitful conclusion to bring the same sense of urgency to our endeavours is rather perplexing.

One of the possible interpretations could be that, whether at the collective and historical level or at the individual and psychological level, it is very difficult to respond appropriately to "answered prayers". For a very long while, especially in some critical areas of the world, States have distrusted each other and prepared for the worst scenarios. For an equally long time effective verification was used as a pre-condition for significant disarmament agreements and, since some were not enthusiastic about its intrusiveness and pervasiveness, the whole disarmament process - bilateral or multilateral - was bogged down. Now that confrontation along East/West lines has abated and verification has been accepted as a major ingredient in any disarmament or arms limitation agreement, it is as if unexpected success and a dramatic change of circumstances have had a paralysing effect on some of us.

It is our common duty, by any yardstick, to break out of this bewilderment and react purposefully to the new international situation. We cannot go on conducting business, here and elsewhere, unduly emotionally attached to our old assumptions, rituals and routines. It is quite clear that we must look very hard into our practices and objectives, adapt them, where necessary, to the new times and do so urgently and thoroughly. It is equally clear that, both structurally and conceptually, this body, this Conference, is a child of the cold war. How can our Conference adapt to the new times? How can we reflect in its structure and procedures a world undergoing rapid change? How can we channel into the multilateral disarmament negotiating body the forces that are knocking down walls and opening minds and frontiers?

(Mr. Azambuja, Brazil)

our structure and ways of doing business; the tireless work done by the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in the 1989-1990 session and the great hopes we can have for its future work, if the negotiators keep in mind the need to succeed in a reasonable time frame.

My two main themes this morning are linked in a multiple way. New thinking should lead to more trust and consequently to the more speedy completion of a CW convention, banning for ever this abhorrent means of warfare. The success of this body in negotiating a multilateral convention of such importance would also, in turn, reinforce trends towards a more harmonious and peaceful international scene. Let us pursue these two objectives simultaneously - the modernization of our working methods and the completion of our first multilateral disarmament agreement in many years. My delegation will contribute to the best of its ability to the attainment of these worthy and urgent objectives.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Argentina, Ambassador García Moritán.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): It is a great pleasure, Sir, to return to the Conference on Disarmament under your presidency. A few years ago I had the opportunity of working with you in the then Committee on Disarmament, and I am familiar with the diplomatic skill you possess to set the pace international circumstances require at the outset of the session. I should also like to express to your predecessor as President, Ambassador Benhima, my delegation's gratitude for the way in which he rounded off the session and for his work in that capacity at the United Nations General Assembly. The presence of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Akashi, enables me to thank him for the valuable help he provides in the consideration of substantive matters. I should like to take this opportunity to mention my particular debt of gratitude towards the secretariat, and to extend my special appreciation to the Secretary-General, Ambassador Komatina, the Deputy Secretary-General, Ambassador Berasategui, and all the staff for the constant and efficient assistance they lend to this negotiating body. I regret that Aida Levin is no longer with us. I know that it would have pleased her to see me performing these new duties.

The President of Mexico's statement, conveyed to this forum by his Ambassador, highlights the significance of our task and the gratitude that we all owe to a man who has turned his life into a struggle for the cause of disarmament. It is not necessary to mention his name, nor do I make so bold as to recall the course of his career. I would simply like to point out that those of us who have been his disciples, those of us who have been his colleagues and are his friends will try to keep aloft the multilateral banner that Alfonso García Robles hoisted over 40 years ago.

In my first statement before the Conference on Disarmament I have the satisfaction of reading the following special message addressed to this body by the President of Argentina, Carlos S. Menem:

(Mr. García Moritán, Argentina)

"On the occasion of the appointment of a new Permanent Representative of my country to the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to share some brief thoughts with the delegations of member States.

"The world seems to be increasingly guided by a more sensible and rational logic. A universalist concept is gaining ground over the ideological rigidity that has so far characterized the present century.

"It is the responsibility of East and West, North and South to contribute to the enhancement of processes of political negotiation. The time has come for common action. Individual security will only be complete if the security of others is duly taken into account.

"In the field of disarmament it is the bounden duty of us all, without any exceptions, to elaborate the multilateral undertakings that will reinforce and give universal coherence to the positive steps taken by the Presidents of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

"It is precisely this negotiating body, the only multilateral forum resulting from universal consensus, which must generate the indispensable measures pertaining to issues which by their very nature cannot be limited to the bilateral level.

"Weapons of mass destruction continue to be the highest priority. Nuclear weapons must disappear from the military lexicon, and the positive negotiations already under way must take account of the fact that a stable and permanent peace should embrace all types of such weapons and all States possessing them. This organ must contribute to that end.

"The convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons which is being drafted by this Conference must not be delayed. It is time our negotiators found the formulae that will enable us to harmonize all our positions and deal with outstanding issues as soon as possible. I have given clear instructions in this regard to the Permanent Representative of my country in those negotiations.

"The prevention of an arms race in outer space is another area that must be tackled with renewed commitment. A sphere that must be reserved for the common welfare of mankind cannot be subjected to power politics.

"Our entire environment needs our attention. We cannot continue neglecting issues that affect our present and future security and in the same context also endanger the survival of man and the world in which he lives.

"In our view the invigorating thrust of liberty and democracy should thrive in a climate of international security, but also one of social justice and economic and technological development.

(Mr. García Moritán, Argentina)

"These are among the reasons that lead me to stress how important it is for the negotiations under way in this as well as in other forums not to impinge on the right of all States to access to technology. A free world is strengthened by generous co-operation in resources and knowledge rather than by limitations and restrictions, which, under the pretext of legitimate interests, perpetuate the division of our world into North and South.

"The international community we all strive for must be underpinned by greater trust, respect and mutual understanding. It is time we all contributed to attaining that goal."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina for his statement, for his kind words addressed to the Chair and for transmitting the important message addressed to the Conference by His Excellency the President of Argentina. The distinguished representative of China, Ambassador Hou Zhitong, has asked for the floor.

Mr. HOU (China) (translated from Chinese): I feel greatly honoured to speak for the first time as head of the Chinese delegation in the plenary of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to begin by warmly congratulating you, as the eminent representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on taking up the Chair for the first month of the 1990 session of the Conference. The Conference has already got off to a smooth start under your skilful guidance, which, I am convinced, will surely lay a good foundation for our work ahead. I wish to assure you that in the performance of your important duties as President you can count on active support and full co-operation from my delegation. I would also like to thank Ambassador Benhima of Morocco, who guided our work skilfully and effectively in August last year and during the inter-sessional period.

At the last plenary meeting on 6 February I listened attentively to the message sent to the Conference by Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, which reflected his personal attention and support and that of the United Nations to the Conference. The presence of Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, at our Conference bears further testimony to such support. We are appreciative of this. We also had the great privilege of seeing His Excellency Mr. Hans van den Brock, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, and His Excellency Mr. Alois Mock, Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister of Austria, attending and addressing the Conference. The facts have shown that Governments and, indeed, the whole international community are lending ever-greater support and attaching great importance to the unique and important role of the Conference as the only multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of a global nature. I also wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ambassador Komatina, Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Ambassador Berasategui, Deputy Secretary-General, and to express my appreciation for the most effective work and the important contribution to the Conference made by them and by the secretariat under their leadership. I would like to ask them to convey the condolences of my delegation on the untimely death of Ms. Annie Rebuzzi.

(Mr. Hou, China)

Mr. President, my delegation warmly welcomes you and the other new colleagues, namely Ambassador Roberto García Moritán of Argentina, Ambassador Gerald Shannon of Canada, Ambassador José Pérez Novoa of Cuba, Ambassador Andrea Negrotto Cambiaso of Italy, Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki of Japan, Ambassador Miguel Marín Bosch of Mexico, Ambassador Stephen Ledogar of the United States and Ambassador Horacio Arteaga of Venezuela. Meanwhile, as China's new Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs, I wish to take this opportunity to express my regards to the distinguished representatives present here. I look forward to co-operating closely with you, my outstanding colleagues, and benefiting from your rich knowledge and experience. The Chinese delegation, together with other delegations, would like to bid farewell and express its best wishes to Ambassador de Montigny Marchand of Canada, Ambassador Vratislav Vajnar of Czechoslovakia, Ambassador Alfonso García Robles of Mexico, Ambassador Max L. Friedersdorf of the United States and Ambassador Adolfo Raúl Taylhardat of Venezuela.

The distinguished representative of Mexico, Ambassador Miguel Marín Bosch, in his capacity as the co-ordinator of the Group of 21, made a statement on behalf of the Group on the re-establishment of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in the plenary on 6 February. My delegation concurs with and supports the statement. It is our consistent position that the future convention on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons should expressly stipulate a ban on the use of such weapons. This also represents the universal demand of the international community. The Final Declaration of the Paris Conference and the relevant resolutions of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly all emphasize this point. We therefore share the view that the mandate to be adopted for the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons should indeed be improved, and that it is appropriate to include a reference on the prohibition of use. We are ready to continue to carry out constructive consultations with you, Mr. President, and with other delegations, in a spirit of active co-operation, so as to bring about an early start to substantive work in the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers today. Does any other member wish to take the floor?

As announced at the opening of this plenary meeting, I shall now suspend it and in five minutes' time, convene an informal meeting of the Conference.

The plenary meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 533rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed.

As no decisions have emerged from the informal meeting just held by the Conference, I propose that we now adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 13 February, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.07 a.m.